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# Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity [Book Review] / Calvin Rock

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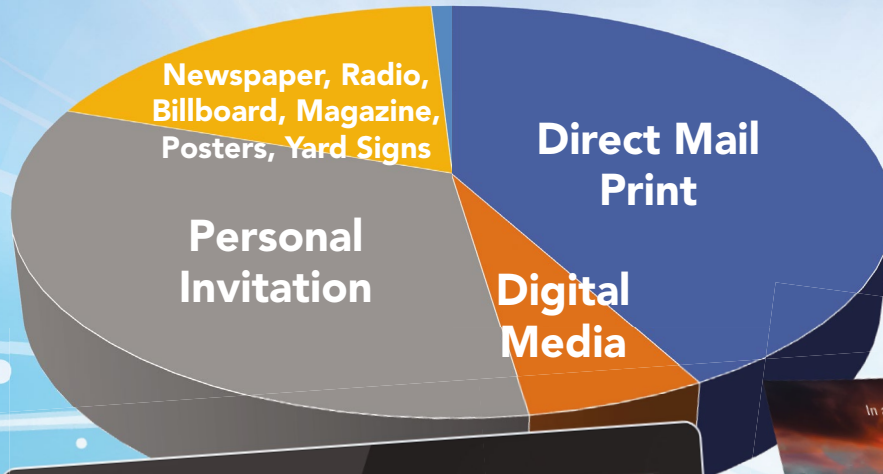
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## 06 Eschatology spells victory

**Leslie Pollard**

Teach and preach Revelation's Jesus: He's worthy, He's a Warrior, and He's a Winner.

## 09 The teaching ministry of Jesus

**John Wesley Taylor V**

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Matt. 28:19). Observe Jesus, learn from Jesus, emulate Jesus.

## 13 Are we there yet? What air travel teaches us about sermon appeals

**Willie Edward Hucks II**

Read how our beloved previous associate editor creatively parallels sermon appeals with the experience of flying.

## 16 "It's all Greek to me." Why should I study biblical languages?

**Petronio M. Genebago**

Refreshing stagnant pastoral ministries may well involve revisiting neglected biblical languages.

## 20 Pedagogy: A practical tool for pastoral ministry

**Nnamdi Edu**

Promoting passionate preaching and tolerating tepid teaching may define contemporary pastoring but can never typify biblical discipleship.

## 23 The time of crisis and prophetic visioning

**John Skrzypaszek**

The author argues that the great controversy and health visions that played a significant role in the past, must play a significant role today.

**Cover note:** Look again at the cover! Did you notice the letters of "eschatology" in the word VICTORY?

## 04 Letters

## 05 Guest Editorial

## 19 Revival and Reformation

## 27 Resources

## 28 Dateline

## 30 Practical Pointers

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*"The Bible is relevant. But it is often made irrelevant by our carelessness in seeing its radical claims in our lives and in society."*

### Supporting our PKs

**M**y mother—a pastor's wife—shared the June 2018 issue of *Ministry* with me due to its content about youth since my husband and I work at a Seventh-day Adventist academy. Instead of reading the first articles, the one that jumped out at me was the article "PK for Life!" by Tere Barron. She spoke straight to this PK's heart, putting into words so many of the feelings I felt growing up. Even though I was blessed with a father who made me a huge priority as his child, sadly, this is because his own father, also a pastor, did not do this for him and he tried to do better. By the midpoint of the article I was in tears. My father died unexpectedly last October so the torch has been passed with finality.

I wish there were a way for more PKs like myself to read this article and share it. Many don't have access to *Ministry* magazine. PKs are a lost demographic—even more so ones who grow up and don't work for the church like my husband and I do. The only ones that completely understand us are other PKs, and our lives are very lonely. Many conferences are now making cuts, presumably to save money. Perhaps they perceive a lack of desire to participate, but these cuts don't allow young pastors to bring their families to pastors' meetings. Gatherings for only pastors/church workers' families

are so vital to create community and understanding and give courage to pastoral families.

Thank you for your inclusion of this article. I hope that you continue to give voice to the unique life that PKs live and provide them with resources for growth and encouragement.

—Jaclyn Knight, New Market, Virginia, United States

### Supporting our youth

**T**hank you for having the courage to publish the editorial "It's Their Time Now" (Jeffrey Brown, June 2018). We live in a world vastly different than the one in which we grew up. Yet most of us, I fear, mindlessly rehearse the Bible truths we grew up with rather than try to interpret the Bible in terms of present realities.

In a world where school shootings, institutional bigotry, and mindless despoiling of our planet and its resources are indisputable, what is our message? Will we resurrect some trite formulas from the past, or will we listen to our young adults and formulate responses that resonate with them and speak to today's societal changes? The Bible is relevant. But it is often made irrelevant by our carelessness in seeing its radical claims in our lives and in society.

It's time to emphasize orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy.

—Stephen Chavez, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

### Supporting our faith

**T**he lead article by Elmer Guzman and Flavio Prestes III, "Making the Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary: An interview with Jacques B. Doukhan" (April 2018), is an expertly done interview with a profound and experienced Seventh-day Adventist professor-scholar. The winsome, but weighty, verbal exchanges between interviewers and interviewee enrich the reader intellectually and theologically and whet the appetite for the projected completion of the SDAIBC in 2020, date of the next General Conference Business Session.

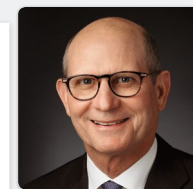
It is refreshing to note the editorial intent to maintain the prioritizing of health in the SDAIBC that is evident in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary. Witness the following statement by Doukhan: "That is why the Seventh-day Adventist faith... also concerns our lifestyle, the way we eat and drink and work, and the way we think and behave in this world." Responding to an inquiry about his personal contribution in the first volume of the SDAIBC, commenting on Genesis, Doukhan aptly makes mention of "the ideal of a plant-based diet (1:29, 30; 9:3), the distinction between clean and unclean meats (7:2, 3; 8:20)." I believe that this continuation of a fine tradition of articulating balanced positions on diet and lifestyle on the scholarly (theological and scientific) level is contextually important in Seventh-day Adventism.

I hope that the completed volumes of the SDAIBC will find their way into libraries of Seventh-day Adventist institutions of learning around the globe and that pastors and other church employees will have opportunity to acquire these nourishing volumes affordably, with book and equipment allowances.

—John Tumpkin, Cape Conference, South Africa



Ted N. C. Wilson, PhD, is the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



## “Jesus is coming again!”

The city of Battle Creek, Michigan, is a significant place in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, for it was there that this movement was officially organized and where it grew dramatically.

Imagine what it must have been like for those faith-filled, forward-looking Adventists to gather together 155 years ago to officially organize the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Representatives from five other states joined with Michigan delegates in Battle Creek from May 20 to 23, 1863, to organize, adopt a constitution, and elect officers for the General Conference.

At the time, there were an estimated 3,500 members scattered across the northern United States, with no more than 30 ministers to shepherd this scattered flock. Seventh-day Adventists were only a tiny minority among American Christians.

Hardly could have the pioneers of this movement, those who were willing to follow wherever Bible truth would lead, imagine what would be the results of their faithfulness. Many had left the churches of their childhood, either voluntarily or by being disfellowshipped, to join a movement that proclaimed the soon coming of Christ. After the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, the vast majority of Advent believers left, some returning to their former churches.

But in spite of ridicule and contempt, a small group pressed on, with open Bibles in their hands and prayers on their lips, to learn God's will and truth as revealed through His Word. And it was thus that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was born.

Today, this worldwide movement includes more than 20 million members living in nearly every country on earth. We have a denominational workforce

of more than 300,000, including nearly 20,000 ordained ministers.


It is clear that only the blessing and guidance of God could have taken the small, humble beginnings of this prophetic, end-time movement and transformed it into what it is today! And all along the way, He has worked through countless lay members and leaders, missionaries and mothers, pastors and retirees, men and women, young people and children—to bless this movement in such a tremendous way.

As Seventh-day Adventist ministers today, what tremendous encouragement we have through the examples of our faith-filled, fearless, yet humble, leaders from the past who followed divine leading, no matter the cost. What wisdom and courage we can gain from them to move forward in our God-given mission today as we look forward to our precious Savior's soon return.

As ministers, are we dedicating all of our talents, gifts, and influence to the cause and service of God? Are we focused on our God-given mission to seek and to save the lost? Do we

recognize and utilize the simplicity and power of the three angels' messages with Christ's righteousness as the core message, as did our pioneers? Do we teach and preach *the Bible*, or do we just talk philosophically *about* the Bible? Do we listen to, and follow, the counsel given to us through the Spirit of Prophecy? Are we responsibly frugal with the means God has entrusted us to do His work? What is the most important thing, the most important goal in your life; in my life; right now?

As a minister, I invite you to prayerfully incorporate the energy, the enthusiasm, the biblical faithfulness, the pleading for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, the joy of the early pioneers into your God-given ministry today and watch with amazement how God will bless beyond what we can imagine as we lift up Christ, His righteousness, His salvation, His sanctuary message, His health message, and His soon coming.

“Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring; Jesus is coming again!” Maranatha!\* 

\* Jessie Strout, “Jesus Is Coming Again,” 1872.

*It is clear that only the blessing and guidance of God could have taken the small, humble beginnings of this prophetic, end-time movement and transformed it into what it is today!*

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**Leslie Pollard, PhD, DMin**, serves as president of Oakwood University. He is a New Testament theologian, specializing in apocalyptic literature.



# Eschatology spells victory<sup>1</sup>

**O**ur home in Alabama sits near a nature reserve, an area of wilderness or swamp that, because it is the habitat of some endangered animal or plant species, the government believes should be preserved.

One sunny Sunday morning I decided that I would like to plant watermelons and cantaloupes. That way my then two-year-old granddaughter, Genesis, could pick fruit with Granddad—and have lasting memories. I drove to the hardware store and bought everything I needed to release my inner farmer, including four planter boxes. Because I had to catch a plane that afternoon for Annual Council, my wife suggested what I might do about the weeds that would have to be removed from the future garden site. “Take some of the extra wardrobe boxes we have and put them on top of the weeds,” she said. “Then when you come back in a week or so, the weeds will have died and will be easier to remove.” She had done exactly that for her own exquisitely manicured garden, and it had seemed to work well. So, I grabbed four large, cardboard wardrobes, flattened them, and hauled them to the garden. There I laid them flat over the grass, placed a brick on each corner to hold them in place, and then rushed to the airport.

Returning a week later, I decided to see what had happened to the weeds. Removing the bricks, I lifted the first layer of cardboard and saw a snake that

was about two and a half feet long and an inch in diameter, very dark in color. At first, I assumed it was a king snake, a nonvenomous member of the local rodent patrol. As I began to put the cardboard back down, something told me that I had better check out the snake more carefully. Picking up a board belonging to one of the planter boxes—about four inches wide, a half inch thick, and four feet long—I positioned myself a safe distance from the snake. When I placed the board in front of its face, the snake struck it. Extending the board a second time caused the snake to throw itself at it again. But this time I noticed the almost snow-white mouth and recognized it as a cottonmouth from the nature preserve. Naturally, I wanted to run away as far as I could from the dangerous creature, but I could not just leave it there.

Suddenly, the strangest thing happened. It was as close as I have ever come to having a vision. As I was about to walk away, I saw, in my mind’s eye, Genesis playing barefooted in the backyard, toddling through the grass, while the poisonous animal, believing that our backyard garden was its personal territory, defended it by attacking my innocent granddaughter.

At that moment I made a quick decision. Taking one of those planter box boards, I measured it over the serpent’s head. Then, raising it over my head as if it were a sledgehammer, with one swift swing the snake became history from a blow to its head.

## The strike of the old serpent

Six thousand years ago, in another garden called Eden, where God planted His children, a serpent took up residence. He, too, had no right to be there. But in this case, he presented himself as a friend. He struck nonetheless. The strike of the “old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Rev. 12:9, KJV), landed in the hearts and minds of our first parents, envenomating the universe with sin in lethal doses—a neurotoxic venom that paralyzed our brains, a necroptotic venom that has destroyed our bodies. That is what sin did to our first parents in the garden that day, and that is what it still does to us. Sin kills marriages and families. It kills external relationships, and it destroys internal peace.

But many in the human family did not believe sin kills. For four thousand years we tried to save ourselves from its power. We prayed, erected altars, offered human sacrifices—all to no avail. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son” (Gal. 4:4, ESV) to redeem us. He came as the Great Physician. In His blood was the antivenom, released on a cross. At the cross, our victorious Christ, with a shout of triumph, smashed the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

## His victory, not ours

Now, the devil is defeated, the power of evil broken, the title deed to planet Earth reclaimed. If our



Seventh-day Adventist eschatology fails to announce His victory, it fails the test of Scripture. For eschatology is not so much about matching daily headlines with Bible texts or placing current events alongside the prophetic chart rule of history, though each of these at certain times will have their appropriate place. Nor is eschatology about scaring audiences with the roars of apocalyptic creatures or birthing wild speculation about deep conspiracies or attacking other denominations. Adventist eschatology spells victory—His victory, not ours! He and His victory must stand at the center of our eschatological message. “Now is come salvation, and strength, . . . for the accuser of our brethren is cast down,” Revelation 12:10 declares (KJV). Our duty is to announce the victory of Christ and the defeat of our enemy.

Notice that wherever Satan appears in the Apocalypse, he does so as a loser. In Revelation 12:7, 8 he launches war—war in heaven—but he loses. He attacks the sun woman with persecution—but “the earth helped the woman” (v. 16, KJV), and Satan loses. In verse 13 he attacks the Man-Child of the woman—but the divine offspring is caught up to heaven. Again, Satan loses.

Then, along with his two allies, the beast and the false prophet, he launches a three-pronged war against the remnant in Revelation 13. Against so mighty a triumvirate, the saints face an overwhelming force. But the next time we see the remnant, in Revelation 14:1–3, they stand victorious atop Mount Zion. Once more, Satan loses.

Do the remnant saints stand there because they are perfect? No, they are the beneficiaries of the Lamb’s victory. “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:11, NKJV). The Lamb wins and the adversary loses. And when Satan appears to triumph in Revelation 11:7 and 13:7, it is only a temporary setback for the two witnesses and the saints, just as Satan’s apparent win at the cross collapsed beneath the power of the crucified Lamb’s resurrection. Can you

not see why Adventist eschatology spells victory!

## Here is God

My wife, Prudence, and I visited the British Museum a few years ago. There we saw an old mariner’s chart, drawn in 1525, illustrating what people then imagined to be the North American coastline. The cartographer made some intriguing notations on areas of the map not yet explored. He wrote in some of those unknown spaces, “Here be giants,” and “Here be fiery scorpions,” and “Here be dragons.” But the British explorer Sir John Franklin scribbled across those fearful scratchings, “Here is God!”

Our eschatology must declare to our members, our administrators, every patient in our hospitals, every student in our schools, and everyone else, in the words of the famous hymn, “This is my Father’s world.”<sup>2</sup> God is in control.

Many, like the early map drawers, have faced the unknown days ahead with fear. Understandably so, for the end times do contain much that can inspire terror. Consider John’s experience in Revelation 5: when sworn in and summoned to take the witness stand of history, he collapsed into tears when the angel asked, “Who is worthy, John?” And, indeed, no one was found worthy! Crushing despair washed over him because if no one was worthy, human salvation was a lost cause. If no one is worthy, then all our innate religious yearnings are for naught. And if no one is worthy, we are hopeless, helpless, and hapless.

Then comes one of the elders. “Stop weeping, John. There is Someone who is worthy.” He is worthy because He stood where Adam stumbled. Let the Advent message forever proclaim that “Christ is worthy.”

## A crimson Warrior

Take a look at another vision of victory in Revelation 19:11–16. Christ gallops out of heaven riding on a white horse, wearing a garment dipped in blood. But this victory image becomes even more powerful when we recognize

that it alludes to Isaiah 63:1–3 (NKJV). “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments,” cries the prophet Isaiah. He continues, “Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?” The answer comes: “ ‘I have trodden the winepress alone.’ ” Gethsemane and Calvary brought the bloodletting required to purchase a fallen world!

But, in this vision in Revelation 19, He is no longer the bruised and bloodied Lamb of Calvary. He comes

*We have often preached about His white robe of righteousness, but I rejoice over the significance of His red robe of victory.*

as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. No longer does He tread the winepress alone. No longer does He labor under the weight of a lost world. And no longer is He prostrate on His hands and knees, sobbing over our salvation.

Revelation 19:11 presents the last and perhaps greatest depiction of Isaiah’s crimson Soldier. It reminds us that our story is not only one of blood but one of victory. “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse” (Rev. 19:11, NKJV). Horses gallop

across the length and breadth of the Apocalypse—red horses, pale horses, black horses, horses with scorpion tails, horses breathing smoke, and locust-shaped horses. But in this final glimpse of equine imagery, John views a white horse—a victory steed ridden by Roman generals after a successful military campaign. The first horse of Revelation is white, as is the last. This majestic passage tells us that the gospel that began in victory will end in victory. Seated atop that white steed is the Man of Calvary, riding in a victory pose, galloping out of heaven. The theme of Revelation is *victory*—His victory over all the forces that seek to defeat Him. And He is our champion because He did what nobody else could do. He stood where Adam stumbled. He paid what we could not pay, the price for our redemption. At Calvary, He came as the Lamb, but in the eschaton, He arrives as a roaring Lion.

John continues to expand on Isaiah's vision of a crimson Warrior. This time, the bloody smatterings of victory are all over Him. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood" (Rev. 19:13, KJV). We have often preached about His white robe of righteousness, but I rejoice over the significance of His red robe of victory. He comes in this final vision to establish justice. The world slays the innocent, excludes the worthy, and elects the debased. Economic exploitation, human sex trafficking, gender oppression, religious persecution, and class warfare seem to reign supreme. And even in the Apocalypse, promised deliverers can be deceivers (compare Daniel 2 and 7). World kingdoms may be glorious on the outside but predatory and corrupt on the inside. Is it any wonder that the land beast of Revelation 13 has two horns—it looks like a lamb and speaks like a dragon? The land beast is both violent and hypocritical. The white horse rider reminds us that every corrupt enemy power will be destroyed—but a remnant will be saved. Justice will be forever established.

## Christ's red robe of victory

Let me conclude with the following observations about Christ's red robe of victory. First, that robe dipped in blood points to *the transparency of His victory*. In Revelation 19 intertextuality and allusion come into play. The only other garment in Scripture dipped in blood was Joseph's coat in Genesis 37, which his brothers used to deceive their father. By contrast, Jesus' robe dipped in blood unleashes liberation for His Father. Jesus fought in total transparency. No guile or deceit was found in Him. His victory has integrity. He went chest to chest with evil and won in total transparency. Because of His victory, that blood-red robe declares that we can trust Him.

Second, that blood-red robe points to *the singularity of His victory*. Catch the power of the image. We witness a ruby-red warrior atop a snow-white steed, escorted by an army of glistening glory clad in "linen, white and clean." Heaven's crimson Commander, draped in a blood-red robe, leads an army dressed "in linen white and clean" (Rev. 19:14, KJV) with not a drop of battle blood on them. Why does the heavenly cavalry wear "linen white and clean"? No backslash of blood is on them because it is His battle, not yours or mine. Let's stop trying to help God. Heaven posts no position for an assistant redeemer. His robe is blood-red and their robes are bleached white for one reason and one reason only—the battle is the Lord's.

So, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. He is God all by Himself, and He is big enough and strong enough to protect and guide His church. I invite all Adventist vege-saviors to find a new mission, stop getting on websites, and pointing fingers, and making anonymous accusations, as if no one is Adventist enough except them, saying, "They are not preaching the straight testimony." Is the straight testimony a laundry list of dos and don'ts, or in Revelation is the straight testimony of the True Witness, "Buy of me gold tried in the fire"? Rather than point our

fingers at each other, why not turn our own eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face? As a leader for 40 years now, I find that the more I interact with our church, the more I see that it is far from perfect. Leaders walk on feet of clay. I learned that there are as many definitions of effective leadership as there are writers on the subject. But here is what else I learned: if we follow Him and His Word, He will always lead us correctly.

Finally, that robe dipped in blood points to *the totality of His victory*. His blood-red robe is a Designer original from the Father's signature collection, a one-of-a-kind, monogrammed, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. He wears "many crowns," so that red robe of victory signifies His right to universal rulership. That is why, one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. Therefore, that blood-red robe says, "Praise Him."

*Praise Him*, because the world cannot contain Him, universities cannot explain Him, philosophers cannot shame Him, and poets cannot rename Him.

*Praise Him*, because parliaments will not unseat Him, armies will not defeat Him, beggars will not deplete Him, and computers will not delete Him.

*Praise Him*, because prosecutors cannot convict Him, traditions cannot constrict Him, preachers cannot predict Him, and presidents cannot restrict Him.

*Praise Him*, because historians cannot erase Him, critics cannot deface Him, Islam cannot displace Him, and the pope can never replace Him.

So, let us go forth to our various fields and invite our members, institutions, churches, and communities to praise Him—because, for every Seventh-day Adventist believer, eschatology spells victory. 🙌

1 Adapted from a devotional by the author delivered at the Fourth International Bible Conference, Rome, Italy, June 11–21, 2018.

2 Maltbie D. Babcock, "This Is My Father's World," 1901.

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# The teaching ministry of Jesus<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was an effective Preacher and sought after Healer. But He was also a master Teacher (Matt. 4:23; John 3:2). Throughout the Gospels, we encounter a variety of teaching episodes—learning experiences crafted specifically for His twelve disciples as well as for the individual or for thousands (Matt. 13:54; Mark 2:13; 4:2; 9:31; 10:1; Luke 4:31; 13:10; John 4:5–26; 7:14). His Sermon on the Mount, for example, was an outdoor training session in which both the disciples and a multitude participated (Matt. 5:1, 2).

In His teaching, Christ used a variety of approaches and methods that promoted engagement and reflection and helped His learners better comprehend and apply His instruction. We will examine some of His strategies.

## Teaching through illustrations

Matthew observed that Jesus often used illustrations (Matt. 13:34). Many of these included *vivid imagery*—picking grapes from thorn bushes, pouring new wine into old wineskins, the blind leading the blind, and a thief unexpectedly breaking into a house (Matt. 7:16; 9:16, 17; 15:14; 24:43, 44). Jesus also used the concrete and familiar stories to teach about the abstract and, perhaps, unknown. “‘Watch out for false prophets,’ ” He said. “‘They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly

they are ferocious wolves’ ” (Matt. 7:15).<sup>2</sup> On another occasion, Jesus warned His disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees. At first, they thought He was speaking in literal terms—but then realized that He “was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 16:11, 12).

Jesus also told *stories*; about 40 are recorded. Their purpose was to make His lessons easy to remember and also to serve as the basis for future learning (Mark 4:33, 34). These stories were generally brief, on average, seven verses in length.<sup>3</sup> The stories were not complex or laden with multiple meanings. Generally, Jesus would focus on a single point. In the story of the 10 virgins, for example, He concluded, “‘Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming’ ” (Matt. 25:13, NKJV). Furthermore, the stories belonged to the people. Jesus did not teach about distant lands or exotic circumstances. Rather, He spoke primarily about the ordinary things of life, such as losing money, looking for a job, making bread, and getting married. Finally, the concepts He embedded in His stories were not trivial but, rather, great truths, such as humility, how to pray, the plan of salvation, and the eternal reward.

Jesus used *current news* as instructional material. When some of His

listeners told Him about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed in the temple, Jesus answered, “‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans . . . ? Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?’ ” (Luke 13:1–5). Similarly, Jesus used what was apparently just-off-the-press news when He told about a man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him (Luke 10:30).

As the basis for teaching, Jesus also used *historical events*. One Sabbath, as Jesus and His disciples were passing through a grain field, some of the disciples began to pick a few heads of grain. The Pharisees accosted Jesus, asking: “‘Why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?’ ” Jesus answered, “‘Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?’ ” (Mark 2:23–26). Similarly, Jesus referred His listeners to Moses’ encounter with God at the burning bush as well as the martyrdom of the prophet Zechariah (Mark 12:26; Luke 11:50, 51).

When teaching certain concepts, Jesus would use *tangible objects*. One day, a group of Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus and asked Him, “‘Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?’ ”

“ ‘Bring me a denarius,’ ” Jesus replied. When they brought the coin, He asked, “ ‘Whose image is this?’ ”

“ ‘Caesar’s,’ ” they said.

“ ‘Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s,’ ” Jesus stated, “ ‘and to God what is God’s’ ” (Mark 12:13–17). On other occasions, Jesus used a withered fig tree to illustrate the power of faith, ravens and lilies to exemplify quiet confidence in God, and bread and wine to represent His own sacrifice (Mark 11:13–23; Luke 12:24–27; Matt. 26:26–28).

## Teaching through action

Jesus believed that it was important for those He taught to be involved in *active learning*. One day the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and asked, “ ‘Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?’ ”

“ ‘Yes, he does,’ ” Peter replied.

“When Peter came into the house,” Jesus asked, “ ‘What do you think, Simon?’ . . . ‘From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?’ ”

“ ‘From others,’ Peter answered.

“ ‘Then the sons are exempt,’ Jesus said to him. ‘But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours’ ” (Matt. 17:24–27).

One might conclude that with so many villages and towns to reach and with such a brief period of ministry available, Christ would send His listeners to individually apply what they had learned. In commissioning the twelve disciples, however, Jesus sent them out two by two (Mark 6:7–13, 30). In like manner, He subsequently sent out 70 others to engage in *collaborative learning* (Luke 10:1).

In prison, John the Baptist wondered whether Jesus was truly the Messiah. He sent his disciples to ask. Jesus did not immediately reply but, rather, went about the activities of His ministry. At the end of the day, Jesus said to these disciples, “ ‘Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor’ ” (Matt. 11:2–5, NLT). Perhaps the greatest example, however, of Christ’s *enacted teaching* took place in the upper room. After the meal was over, Jesus arose from the table, wrapped a towel around His waist, and began to wash His disciples’ feet (John 13:4, 5, 12–17).

## Teaching for thinking

When teaching, Jesus would often ask, “What do you think?” (Matt 17:25; 18:12; 22:42; 21:28). Then He would extend their thinking in a variety of ways.

For example, Jesus made use of similes and metaphors, often expanding these into well-developed *analogies*. He compared His generation to children playing in the marketplaces and calling out to their companions: “ ‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn’ ” (Matt. 11:16–19). He then went on to describe how many had similarly

chosen to reject both the ministry of John the Baptist as too austere and that of the Son of Man as overly accepting. On another occasion, Christ pointed out the hypocrisy and skin-deep religiosity of the scribes and Pharisees, likening them to “ ‘whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead’ ” (Matt. 23:27, 28).<sup>4</sup>

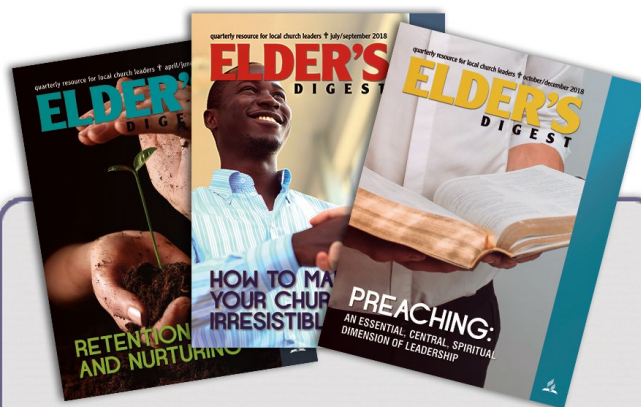
Jesus asked *questions* effectively (Luke 2:46, 47). As a teacher, He used questions for a variety of reasons: to remember the known (Matt. 16:9, 10), clarify concepts (Luke 13:14–16), correct erroneous ideas (John 4:35), guide thinking (Matt. 11:7–9), motivate personal thought (Matt. 16:13–15), affirm truth in the mind (Matt. 14:31), and invite a faith response (Mark 5:30).

Jesus also invited His listeners to engage in *analysis and reasoning*. When His opponents declared that He drove out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, Jesus replied, “ ‘How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand’ ” (Mark 3:22–27).<sup>5</sup>

Jesus engaged His learners in *problem solving*. In addition to story problems—such as that of the sons of the owner of a vineyard (Matt. 21:28–31), Jesus used learning experiences as problem-solving assignments. After He had been teaching a group of thousands, His disciples came to Him late in the afternoon and said, “ ‘Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.’ ”

Jesus replied, “ ‘You give them something to eat’ ” (Luke 9:12, 13).

On various occasions, Christ led His learners through *comparison and contrast*. The parable of the wise man and the foolish man is a prime example. There were



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aspects in common—receiving instruction, building a house, experiencing a storm. But there were distinguishing elements as well—the application of knowledge, the foundation, and the outcome (Matt. 7:24–27).<sup>6</sup>

Christ wanted His listeners to grapple with conundrums and, thereby, engage in deep thinking. Here are some examples of *paradoxes and anomalies* that He used for this purpose: “ ‘Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave’ ” (Matt. 20:26, 27). “ ‘Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it’ ” (Luke 17:33). “ ‘Many who are first will be last, and the last first’ ” (Mark 10:31).<sup>7</sup>

## Teaching for retention

Jesus understood that crucial concepts are not learned through a single exposure. *Repetition* is needed. To enhance reinforcement, however, Jesus incorporated *variety*. A key construct in Christ’s teaching, for example, was the kingdom of heaven. On one occasion, He told His listeners, “ ‘The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you’ ” (Matt. 13:11). Then He proceeded to approach the concept from multiple perspectives: a man who sowed good seed in his field, a mustard seed, yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour, treasure buried in a field, a merchant looking for fine pearls, and a net that caught all kinds of fish (Matt. 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47).

In Jesus’ time, many held the idea that poverty was God’s curse while riches were evidence of His favor. In refuting this misconception, Jesus stated, “ ‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God’ ” (Luke 18:25, NKJV). Pointing out the Pharisees’ myopic focus on trivia, He declared, “ ‘You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel’ ” (Matt. 23:24). Discussing the human tendency to find fault with others, Jesus talked about removing the plank

from one’s own eye before focusing on the speck in another’s eye (Luke 6:41, 42). In each case, Jesus used *hyperbole* to underscore a concept and make it memorable.

## The case of the Samaritan woman

What do you see when you observe Jesus, the Teacher? Consider His interactions with the woman at the well (John 4:5–26).

We might begin by noting that the learner was a marginalized person, with at least three strikes against her. First, she was a woman, and in that time and place, this meant that she was excluded from certain privileges. Second, she was also a Samaritan, an ethnic minority demeaned and sidelined by the Jews. Third, she was of flawed reputation, ostracized by her community. The fact that she came alone to the well at noon, rather than in the morning or evening when the women of a community would typically gather for the social event, reveals that the women of her village scorned her.

Jesus, the Teacher, sits near the well. He is available, accessible. When the learner arrives, Jesus takes the initiative and asks, “Could you give Me a drink?” It is a request that the woman can readily fulfill. It is an expression that helps her feel valued and that provides an opportunity for service. Further, by asking for water, Jesus arouses interest. “How is it,” the woman asks, “that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (John 4:9, NKJV).

Notice also that Jesus begins with water, the topic that has motivated her journey to the well. But then He inserts an anomaly: *Anyone who drinks the water that I give will never be thirsty again. This living water, in fact, will become a fresh, artesian spring, bubbling up into eternal life.* In so doing, Jesus transitions from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract, from the physical to the spiritual, and from the immediate to the eternal.

When the woman asks for this water, Jesus instructs her to go and

bring her husband. It is an opportunity for witness, an assignment to share her knowledge with others. It also seeks to involve the student in active learning. In the dialogue that follows, Jesus moves from the learner’s immediate need, water, to her deep needs of self-worth and positive relationships. It is evident that Jesus knows the background, needs, interests, and dreams of His listener.

Jesus also helps resolve the learner’s misconceptions by clarifying concepts, in this case, her beliefs regarding worship: that it is not defined in terms of a place but of a spiritual experience. To wrap up the lesson, the Teacher delivers direct instruction, declaring, “I Am the Messiah!” Through it all, the overarching purpose is that the learner might know God and experience His saving power. It is a lesson focused on hope and transformation.

What were the outcomes? “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’ They came out of the town and made their way toward him. . . .

“So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

“They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world’ ” (John 4:28–30, 40–42).

The woman becomes a believer, witness, and disciple-maker. And all because of her encounter with the Teacher and the life-changing effect of a single lesson.

## The impact of His teaching

Jesus’ teaching strategies had a profound influence on His learners. When He taught, His listeners were surprised at His teaching because He spoke with confidence, in contrast to the teachers of the law (Matt. 7:28, 29). Turning to each other in amazement, they asked, “ ‘Where did this man get these things?’ ”

(Mark 6:2, 3) “‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel’ ” (Matt. 9:33).<sup>8</sup>

One day, alarmed with His growing popularity, the chief priests “sent the temple guards to arrest Him.” At the end of the day, the guards returned empty-handed. “‘Why didn’t you bring Him in?’ ” the priests raged.

“ ‘No one ever spoke the way this man does,’ ” the guards declared (John 7:32, 45, 46).

After His resurrection, Christ appeared unrecognized to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and fell into conversation with them. Later that evening, when they finally realized who their Guest had been, they exclaimed, “ ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road

and opened the Scriptures to us?’ ” (Luke 24:32).

The influence of Jesus, the Teacher sent from God, can also be experienced in our lives and ministry. To paraphrase the words of John: Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the entire world would not have room for the books that would be written. But these were written that you might have faith in Christ, the Son of God; and having faith, that you might *teach as He taught* (John 20:30, 31; 21:25).

Hence, as chaplains or ministers, whatever else our roles call us to do, we, too, need to be effective teachers. And thus, by learning from Jesus, we can learn from the best. 📖

- 1 Adapted from John Wesley Taylor V, “Jesus Christ: Master Teacher,” *Journal of Adventist Education*, December 2010/January 2011, 4–9, [http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/JAE\\_v73n2.pdf](http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/JAE_v73n2.pdf).
- 2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the New International Version.
- 3 The longest, the story of the prodigal son, is 22 verses in length, while four of the stories are told in a single verse.
- 4 In similar ways, Christ used analogies of a fig tree in springtime and of a hen gathering her chicks (Matt. 24:32, 33; 23:37).
- 5 See also Matthew 22:41–46.
- 6 Christ also told the story of ten virgins, all of whom were waiting for the bridegroom and all of whom slept. Five, however, had taken extra oil. These entered the joy of the marriage celebration, while the other five found themselves barred from the event (Matt. 25:1–13).
- 7 See also Matthew 11:11.
- 8 See also Luke 13:17.

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# “Are we there yet?”

## *What air travel teaches us about sermon appeals*

We expect a quick flight from Chicago to South Bend of only twenty-three minutes. We will have you there shortly.” The first officer spoke those words that I had been waiting to hear. I settled into my window seat, buckled my safety belt, and texted my wife that everything was running on schedule and that I would meet her at the luggage carousel.

Soon thereafter, the small jet roared down the runway before quickly ascending over the beautiful downtown skyline, reaching its cruising altitude over Lake Michigan, descending over the eastern shore of that Great Lake, landing on one of the two runways at the small South Bend airport, and parking at the gate. My excitement was peaking because, although it had only been a short trip to Texas to visit my parents, I would soon be greeted by my wife and be driven home.

Sitting near the front of the plane, I quickly unfastened my safety belt, grabbed my backpack, and waited for the flight attendant to give my fellow passengers and me permission to deplane. And that was when the frustration settled in. Tired of standing, I sat down and waited—and waited. There was a mechanical malfunction with the jet bridge, and a call was issued

for a mechanic to come to determine what was causing the malfunction and repair it.

Sitting at the gate, so close to deplaning, seeing my wife, going home. But I could not.

### The travel experience in homiletic terms

Preaching a sermon resembles air travel in several ways, with each element of the flying experience finding a counterpart in the sermon—from arriving at the airport for the flight to departing the last airport after finally arriving.

At the conclusion of a recent overseas teaching assignment, my host dropped me off at the airport, at which time I had to fend for myself in terms of navigating the bustling concourse. I stood in front of a huge electronic display, attempting to determine where I needed to go to check in for my flight. That information paved the way for me to take the initial steps in my journey home.

For some, the title of the sermon serves that same function.<sup>1</sup> It provides the initial direction that guides the Holy Spirit-led speaker in the direction that the speaker wishes the listeners to go.

Passengers eventually board the plane and settle in, after which the aircraft taxis to the runway, takes off, and ascends to its cruising altitude. The

sermon introduction serves a similar function in that no airplane pulls away from the gate and instantaneously reaches cruising altitude. The climb must be gradual to be smooth—leading to the main part of the flight that carries the passengers from point A to point B. So, also, with the sermon introduction, in that it should be measured and well-executed, leading to what is considered the main part of the presentation—the body.

The body of the sermon can be likened to the portion of the flight that takes place at cruising altitude, in that it is the part that receives the most focus. As in long-haul flights, passengers expend most of their energies during this portion of the flight (eating, reading, sleeping, entertaining themselves), so also do preachers traditionally spend the bulk of their time studying and preparing for this portion of the sermon. The logic that drives such efforts centers on the notion that information dissemination equates to capable homiletics. However, the body of the sermon must be seen as one of several pieces of the homiletical puzzle.

### Are we almost there yet?

Long before a crew member announces the descent of the aircraft,

frequent flyers intuitively recognize the clues that final approach is a pending reality. Especially if it is a cross-country or international flight, they know how much time they have before they have to put away their laptop or use the lavatory one last time. Descent provides time to prepare for a successful landing.

The conclusion of a sermon approximates the gradual descent of an aircraft and a smooth landing. The bulk of the

The actual time in the air is much less than that. Having said that, the journey lasted much longer than that; for he, my wife, and I had to get up, get dressed, and drive two hours to Chicago to take him to the airport. Then he had to check in, clear security, wait to board, travel, land, wait for his friend to pick him up from the airport, and then ride 40 minutes to the friend's house. A two-hour flight turned out to be a seven- or eight-hour event.

*A preferable approach would be to engage the listeners in a series of questions that cause them to look introspectively at where they are and where they need to go.*

journey is now behind the passengers and crew—it is time to touch terra firma once again. As the ascent was gradual and graceful, so also must be the descent and landing. Anything otherwise proves unsettling. Passengers often save their greatest compliments for pilots who execute smooth landings.

Those who sit and listen to our sermons do not expect or anticipate that the sermon will experience a “hard landing.” They want to sense that we as preachers know when the time has come to gracefully reduce the “altitude” and successfully “land.” Even if the sermon has proved to border on the disastrous, no one wants a hard landing. Congregants still want some form of notification that your sermon “flight” will soon conclude.

### **The most important element of the sermon “flight”**

My son recently returned to Baltimore after spending a week with his mother and me. The flight was listed as being one hour and 45 minutes long, although that period reflects the length of time from when the plane departs the gate to when it reaches the arrival gate.

The journey did not end until he reached his final destination.

Sermon delivery functions the same way in that the sermon does not end until the “passengers” are able to access their final destination. When landing an airplane, it is not good enough to approach the runway—or even touch down and roll onto the tarmac. The captain has to bring the aircraft all the way to the gate and park. More than that, the jetway operator has to extend the walkway to the plane's door so that the passengers can proceed to their destination. If the passengers do not have the opportunity to reach their final destination, the flight crews, whether on the plane or on the ground, failed to perform.

In the same manner, if the congregation does not have an opportunity to make a decision as a result of the sermon, the preacher has failed in what he attempted to preach. No one should think to end a sermon without making an appeal any more than pilots would think to end a flight without delivering his or her passengers to their final destination; that is, their job is to get them into the airport terminal, so they can go to their house, hotel, business meeting, or vacation spot.

## **The art of the appeal**

One of the biggest challenges that both experienced and beginning preachers alike face is crafting and delivering effective appeals. Many reasons exist as to why preachers struggle with this fifth and final part of the sermon. Some speakers lack confidence in their ability to persuade,<sup>2</sup> or they lack confidence in their preparation. Others fear rejection—that no one will respond—and embarrassment, taking the rejection as a personal affront; or they believe asking people to make a decision amounts to intruding into one's personal space.

Preachers, however, have permission to intrude into the personal space of the listener, as such permission is inherent in the call to occupy the pulpit and in the listener's choice to occupy the pew. Our approach to the hearts of the listeners should be direct, targeted, and undeniable. Haddon Robinson writes, “Like an able lawyer, a minister asks for a verdict. Your congregation should see your idea entire and complete, and they should know and feel what God's truth demands of them.”<sup>3</sup> This approach calls for three components in each appeal: reflection, decision, and action.

**Reflection.** Reflection involves critical listening, which, in turn, involves interpreting the message, judging its strengths and weaknesses, and assigning value to it.<sup>4</sup> Assigning value during the process of an appeal calls for listeners to ask themselves, “What has this sermon said to me?” “Why should this sermon matter to me?” “What should I do as a result of hearing the preacher today?” Reflection demands that the listeners interact with the preacher and his or her questions, as well as interact with the Holy Spirit who, during the sermon, spoke differently to each person sitting in the congregation.

The approach of the preacher is critical in this process. Many preachers take it upon themselves throughout their appeals to instruct the congregation as to what they should think and how they should respond. Such an approach inhibits the listeners' ability to reflect upon precisely how the Holy Spirit wishes for them to respond. A



preferable approach would be to engage the listeners in a series of questions that cause them to look introspectively at where they are and where they need to go. Such an approach creates the environment for each person to arrive at the destination the Holy Spirit designates each of them to reach.

**Decision.** When listeners reflect and ask themselves what they should do as a result of the queries placed before them during the initial portion of the appeal, this reflection demands that the listeners take the next step. That step is based upon the nature of the sermon.

For example, if the sermon is evangelistic in its intent, about mission and outreach, the person may reflect upon his or her lack of reaching out to others and then decide, “I will commit to being used by God to share my faith.” If it is horizontal in its intent, about impacting the community for its betterment, the person may reflect upon his or her sheltered existence and then decide, “I’m going to learn more about the needs of my community.” If the sermon is vertical in its intent, about a closer walk with God, the person may decide that he or she is going to give God permission to renew and restore him or her. Each person arrives at their decision based upon where they are in their journey.

**Action.** Each of these three stages is important. However, if an action plan is not established, then the pathos of the moment is lost as soon as the benediction is pronounced and the congregation starts meeting and greeting in the sanctuary, foyer, or parking lot. The preacher must create a climate during the appeal in which the expectation exists that the listeners must do something concrete about what they have reflected upon and decided. Any approach that falls short effectively displays approval for a *logos* (informational) approach, settling for a dynamic sermon with mental enrichment and cognitive stimulation—but lacking the result of a *pathos* (transformational) approach that reveals itself in a Spirit-filled, renewed lifestyle.

In other words, while the preacher does well to incorporate the components of reflection, decision, and action in the appeal, omitting even one of these proves akin to landing an aircraft and taxiing to the gate—but not opening the door to the jetway so that the passengers can exit and transit to their appointed destinations. Just as each passenger determines how they are getting to their next destination, so also must people in the congregations create a plan that determines how they arrive at the place where the Holy Spirit wishes them to be.

## Peter: A congregation of one

Consider the case of Peter: a one-person congregation to whom Jesus made a sermonic appeal! True to Christ’s prediction (Luke 22:34), Peter denied any knowledge of Jesus on three occasions, all in quick succession. Then came Peter’s life-changing moment (v. 61). When Luke spoke of Jesus’ looking at Peter, the Greek of the passage indicates a targeted, direct gaze, not a casual glance. Without saying a word, Jesus made a sermonic appeal to Peter.

Peter then engaged with the three components of an effective appeal. He reflected upon his brash promise of unswerving fidelity to Christ (v. 33). Recognizing that he failed miserably, he then decided how he would respond to Christ’s intent look into his soul, and he experienced the heartbreak of breaking the heart of his Rabbi.

Reflection and decision, however, were not enough; for a moment of regret and disappointment can easily fade into recalcitrance and defiance after the initial confrontation. Peter had to act. The Peter who denied his Lord became the Peter who, in John 21, acted upon his decision by repeatedly affirming his love for his Lord, having experienced the change of mind and course of action predicted by Jesus (Luke 22:32), and becoming the first great evangelist of the post-Resurrection Christian church.

And the seminal moment transpired during an appeal.

## My appeal about appeals

The flight attendant on board the aircraft that brought me to South Bend from Chicago finally gave the other passengers and me permission to deplane. With intentionality and decisiveness, I traversed the long corridor adjacent to the gates and exited the secured area. Soon thereafter, I was greeted by the smiling face and warm embrace of my wife. All I needed was access to the airport terminal so that I could eventually experience sweet communion with my bride.

Preachers of the gospel take the same approach when delivering appeals. We stand between God and the people, speaking with intentionality and decisiveness, desiring for the listeners to let Jesus in because He stands at the doors of their hearts and knocks (Rev. 3:20); He wants nothing less than sweet communion with His bride.

Do you hesitate to make appeals? Do you fear that people will ignore what you have to say to them? Should you and I, rather, trust the Holy Spirit to work on the hearts of our listeners? There is power in God’s Word to sanctify saints and sinners alike (John 17:17). Stand boldly and appeal to the people in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17), and see what God will do through humble vessels of clay! 🙏

- 1 Many homiletics have traditionally defined the parts of the sermon as the introduction, body, conclusion, and appeal. In my teaching, I incorporate a fifth element, the title, right at the beginning. The title proves a critical element that links the listeners to the other vital components of the sermon.
- 2 By using the word *persuade*, I speak in the context of employing pathos. By *pathos*, I speak of appropriately tapping into the human experience that recognizes that humans were created as emotional beings. I do not speak of appealing to or with emotionalism.
- 3 Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 176.
- 4 For further explication, see Bruce E. Gronbeck et al., *Principles and Types of Speech Communication*, 13th ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1997), 35; and Willie Edward Hucks II, “A Preaching Program to Instill Social Consciousness in African-American Churches in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas,” (DMin diss., Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2005), 105–107.

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# “It’s all Greek to me.”

## *Why should I study biblical languages?*

**W**hy should pastors and Bible teachers in training study biblical languages? How does a basic knowledge of biblical languages enhance one’s ministry in preaching or teaching? Seeking to complete an undergraduate religion major or seminary training and skipping courses in Hebrew or Greek is often a temptation for future Bible teachers or pastors. Such an attitude toward biblical languages may arise from any number of reasons. Some may argue that their ministry would be in a nonacademic setting, and, hence, they need not learn the original languages of the Bible. Others may insist that their ministry may never call for the use of Hebrew or Greek. They may further advise: “The seminaries could spare their ministerial students a lot of grief and frustration by making it optional.” Still others would point to the availability of multiple Bible translations to arrive at what exactly a particular text says, without going through the agony of studying Hebrew or Greek. Then there is the simple reason: face it, neither Hebrew nor Greek is easy to learn.

Such objections overlook the incredible blessing that literacy in biblical languages can bring to Bible

teaching and pastoral ministry. This article reviews four reasons why a basic knowledge of biblical languages is an essential aid for effective ministry.

### **Reason 1: Knowing the Bible in the original language**

In reading, studying, or researching any literature, there is always an advantage in going back to the original text and language in which it was written. How much more so when it comes to the study of God’s Word. The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Jacques Doukhan points out that intimacy with God can be enhanced by understanding the context of ancient Israel, whose authors have reported their experiences in two thousand years of the Hebrew language. This may also be true for Greek.

Studying the Bible in these languages will help the reader understand better what God has revealed. William Mounce says that learning Greek can help the person “effectively make known the grace of God to all people.” Long before this, Martin Luther testified, “Although the gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages. . . .

For just when God wanted to spread the gospel throughout the world by means of the apostles he gave the tongues for that purpose.” Larry Lee Walker argues, “No translation can replace the original languages of the Bible in primary importance for conveying and perpetuating divine revelation.” Thus, studying the Bible in its original languages can deepen one’s understanding of God and help the pastor to share the gospel effectively.

### **Reason 2: The exegesis requires knowledge of original languages**

*Exegesis* is defined as the “careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning. This is basically a historical task. It is the attempt to hear the Word as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was *the original intent of the words of the Bible*.”

Dallas Willard suggests three ways in which exegesis helps in the study of a text: to understand the grammar of the passage, to know the meaning of particular words in a sentence, and to grasp the message of the text as a whole. The first and second approaches call for a knowledge of biblical languages. John Henry Bennetch suggests

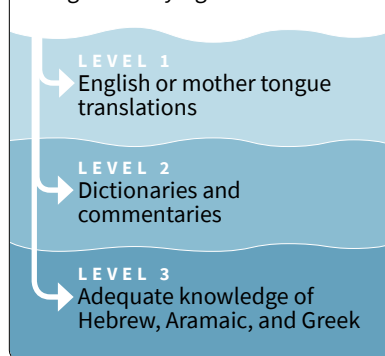
that “any thorough-going study of the Bible—true penetration into the reaches of divine truth—necessitates a working knowledge of the original.” Luther argued that the church fathers misinterpreted the Scriptures when they tried to defend certain teachings because of their lack of knowledge of original languages. An interpreter can easily err and do selective exegesis (reading one’s “own, completely foreign, ideas into a text”) when he or she does not have adequate knowledge of biblical languages. To avoid inadequate or wrong exegesis, pastors, teachers, and preachers need to have adequate knowledge of original languages.

Ekkehardt Mueller argues: “All those who do not have access to the respective biblical language should consult—where possible—a number of good translations.” Tarsee Li concurs: “There is no substitute to being able to read the Bible in the original languages. When that is not possible, several translations should be compared with one another to make sure the text says the same in English as in the original languages.” While diligent comparison with different translations is helpful, without adequate knowledge of original languages, interpreters are limiting themselves to others’ translations and interpretations. To that extent, such an interpretation suffers an exegetic limitation. Mueller clarifies, “Nuances and options exist that no translation can ever capture. The translators have already made certain decisions, and even the best translation is already an interpretation.” Grant Osborne opines that interpreters will find great difficulty in dealing with grammar and syntax without knowing the original languages. Although they are not hopeless, the “problem is that they must then depend on secondary sources, mainly translations and the better commentaries.”

Interpreters need to have an adequate working knowledge of biblical languages to exegete properly and not depend on translations and commentaries. Without it, such an exegesis will not be true to its spirit. Figure 1 shows

how deep one can go in studying the Bible. Without the adequate knowledge of biblical languages, one can go as deep as level two only. With language skills, one can reach level three, where are found “unexpected treasures that surprise and delight the soul.” Mounce appreciates “good translations” of the Bible as a way for the preacher to understand the Word and be a good

**Figure 1.** How deep Bible students can go in studying the Bible



**Figure 2.** How deep Bible students go in studying the Bible and its effect on teaching and preaching



preacher. However, in the absence of “proper tools,” preachers are limited in their “ability to deal with the text.” Luther says: “A simple preacher (it is true) has so many clear passages and texts available through translations that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life, and preach to others. But when it comes to interpreting

Scripture, and working with it on your own, and disputing with those who cite it incorrectly, he is unequal to the task; that cannot be done without languages.”

However, armed with adequate knowledge of Bible languages, the person can have a deeper, level 3, understanding of Scripture that will help in effective teaching and preaching. Figure 2 illustrates how Bible students with a knowledge of original languages can plunge deeply in the study of the Bible and experience its effect on teaching and preaching.

### Reason 3: Difficulty of recognizing original expressions after translation

The original languages have expressions that are difficult to express in translations. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart recognize this phenomenon in wordplays in original expressions of poetry in both the testaments. They write: “Wordplays tend to abound in most languages, but they are always unique to the original language and can almost never be ‘translated’ into a receptor language.”<sup>1</sup> William C. Williams validates this in the study of the Old Testament. He says that those studying Hebrew would be able to “understand expressions in the Hebrew language that are simply impossible to fully translate” and assures them that learning those expressions directly from studying the original language would bless their hearts.<sup>2</sup> For instance, Ruth 1:1–7 illustrates the wordplay that can be found in Hebrew that is lost in translation. Verses 1 and 2 record, “In the days when the judges ruled there was a *famine* in the land, and a man of *Bethlehem* in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from *Bethlehem* in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there” (ESV; emphasis added).



Wordplay present in this passage in Hebrew is not obvious in English. The passage relates that there was a famine in the land that caused Elimelech's family to leave Bethlehem for Moab. Bethlehem, mentioned here twice, is in Hebrew *bet lechem*, which means "house of bread."<sup>3</sup> In verse 6, the word *lechem* is mentioned. Studying the passage closely, one can notice that there was a famine in the *house of bread*. Could there be a famine in the *house of bread*? The lack of bread was the reason why Elimelech with his family left *the house of bread*, and *bread* was also the reason why Naomi with Ruth returned to Bethlehem, because God visited His people by giving them *lechem*. The wordplay is clear: "there is no bread in the house of bread," or "there is no food in the house of food."<sup>4</sup>

This wordplay may raise questions in one's mind. What was the reason the *house of bread* experienced the lack of bread? Matthew Henry observes, "When the land had rest, yet it had not plenty; even in Bethlehem, which signifies *the house of bread*, there was scarcity. A fruitful land is turned into barrenness, to correct and restrain the luxury and wantonness of those that dwell therein."<sup>5</sup>

God was the source of both the physical bread for Bethlehem during the time of Ruth and the spiritual bread when the seed of Ruth was born in Bethlehem. Did not Jesus say, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)? Thus, it is easy to miss a wordplay and a message when there is lack of knowledge in the biblical languages.

## Reason 4: The witness of scholars

The fourth reason for the study of original languages is the testimony of scholars who were able to mine the richest treasures of the Word because of their knowledge of the original languages. James M. Efrid recognizes that studying Greek "can be exciting," but "it will entail a great deal of detailed work."<sup>6</sup> Doukhan comments that some (seminarians and pastors) resorted to an analytical lexicon because of the

"valid and invalid" grounds ahead of them in the study of biblical languages.<sup>7</sup>

Yes, the study of biblical languages may be difficult and time-consuming but, surely, not a waste of time. A number of scholars can testify to the merit of studying biblical languages. Efrid expresses that studying Greek entails "a great deal of detailed work, but the most important consideration must be that after the hard work one will be able to read the New Testament in its original language. That is the foundation stone of correct and proper exegesis and interpretation."<sup>8</sup>

Bennetch provides a list of great leaders in the history of the church who made use of biblical languages: Augustine and John Calvin, Jerome and Erasmus, Luther and Wesley—even Charles Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody, who had no formal theological education.<sup>9</sup> Doukhan mentions several witnesses, from the church fathers and Reformers to modern theologians, who emphasized the merit and worth of studying the original language.<sup>10</sup> Mounce speaks of John Wesley, who could "quote Scripture in Greek better than in English."<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Edwards received diligent instruction from both home and school in Greek and Hebrew.<sup>12</sup> Both scholars and nonscholars can testify that learning the original languages is beneficial. Many believed that the depth of preaching and teaching depends on one's solid understanding and knowledge of the New Testament Greek<sup>13</sup> and other languages. Luther illustrates the benefits of knowing the biblical languages: "When our faith is thus held up to ridicule, where does the fault lie? It lies in our ignorance of the languages; and there is no other way out than to learn the languages. Was not St. Jerome compelled to translate the Psalter anew from the Hebrew because, when we quoted our Psalter in disputes with the Jews, they sneered at us, pointing out that our texts did not read that way in the original Hebrew? Now the expositions of all the early fathers who dealt with Scripture apart from a knowledge of the languages (even when their teaching is not in error) are such that they often

employ uncertain, indefensible, and inappropriate expressions. They grope their way like a blind man along the wall, frequently missing the sense of the text and twisting it to suit their fancy."<sup>14</sup>

With the meaning and authenticity of Scripture shown in its original language, the study of the Bible can lead to a deeper understanding of God's Word and help in effective teaching and preaching. "The sharper our interpretive tools, the deeper our understanding of the text of Scripture and, consequently, the greater the impact on our lives and ministries."<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

The study of the Bible in its original languages leads to a deeper understanding of Scripture. Bible scholars, pastors, and teachers who are interested in deepening their understanding of God's Word, as well as teaching and preaching Scripture more effectively, would do well to know the original biblical languages. Such a linguistic skill may be obtained through personal study, taking language classes in colleges and seminaries, and through correspondence courses. The task is challenging, but the benefits are immense. Adventist colleges and seminaries should encourage their future Bible instructors, teachers, and pastors to plow through the classes in Hebrew and Greek. The start may be difficult, but once they have finished the course, such students will find their future ministry immensely rewarding and authoritative. A working knowledge of biblical languages is a priceless treasure both to personal spiritual enrichment and to ministry at large. 📖

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## Greatest victories

As a campus, we couldn't let this superlative go. It's the second word of several powerful lines, and it drew us in.

"The *greatest* [emphasis mine] victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power."\*

It isn't better preachers, teachers, administrators, or even donors that God needs to make our campus a lighthouse in Colorado; it is more earnest praying that will bring about the greatest success. These lines call us to the Champion Academy campus every Wednesday morning at the front of the church sanctuary for an hour of prayer together. Pastors, an elementary teacher, the academy principal, and elders bow together, bringing God's promises back to Him and interceding for individual and campus needs. Laying hold of the mighty arm of power changes the ones on their knees and calls them back to making all their wants and wishes known. It's galvanizing. Paul Bragaw, an elementary school teacher on campus, admits that the prayer time "inspires me to want to be in God's presence more."

The entire hour is spent in honest, open pleading with God for His Spirit and for His blessing and guidance. Often, tears are shed as promises are repeated and petitions pleaded for. A bit

of tradition has emerged. In closing, we offer a song from our knees that praises or thanks God for who He is and what He has done.

One of the most unexpected answers came nearly two years ago when the church began the conversation about building a small addition to the current facility. The cost was calculated to be about \$400,000. We took it to God in prayer and felt impressed not to ask for that amount but to ask for \$2 million. Within the group is a short list of big requests—petitions for our campus enrollment, a number of baptisms, or financial needs—and these are numbers that are far beyond what is being done or is possible. We want to challenge God to do just that—the impossible. So we added the petition for \$2 million, not understanding why or how.

A year after initiating that prayer request for \$2 million, the church came together to discuss and finalize the conversation about what, exactly, we would need in an additional building space. All the considerations for space and ministry growth were outlined and then submitted to an architect to draw up preliminary plans and estimate cost. The report came back, and the cost was figured right at \$2 million. Before we ever dreamed of the need, God had put the amount on our hearts to bring back to Him.

At many junctures of the planning and capital campaign, there have been opportunities for doubts. *Will we really be able to raise this money while*

*continuing the growth of the church and schools?* But when the doubt is shared with God, He has always asked me the question: "Who came up with that number first?"

In the fall of 2018, Champion church will be breaking ground on an addition that will provide expanded opportunities to impact the campus and community with the hope and love of Jesus. Several of the big requests have been answered, but not all of them. We continue to claim God's promises for several. But God has made it clear to this small circle that on their knees is where the greatest victories will be won.

When I walk out of the sanctuary on Wednesday morning and into my office to take on the ministry needs of the day, there is a cogent sense that the weightiest and most effective work of the day has already been done. It wasn't easy, but it was sweet, and it has instilled in me the confidence that we have a God who still wants to give great victories to churches, schools, and individuals. Here in Champion, Colorado, we will pray on. 🙏

—Written by Micheal Goetz, DMin, lead pastor of the Champion Seventh-day Adventist Church, Loveland, Colorado, United States.

\* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 203.

# Revival & REFORMATION



# Pedagogy: *A practical tool for pastoral ministry*

## Introduction

One of the primary objectives of the pastor is to facilitate both the redemption and the equipping of church members by teaching the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> This means that even as the pastor preaches the Word, he or she also undertakes the work of a teacher. The Bible says, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the ministry and teaching are inseparable—they are entwined for a collegial purpose. Ellen White stated, “The work of education and the work of redemption are one.”<sup>3</sup>

Pedagogy, defined as “the principles and methods of instruction,”<sup>4</sup> is a common word among educators in general and in religious education in particular. As pedagogy and pastoral ministry are integrative, the following questions are pertinent: (1) What effect does pedagogy have on pastoral ministry? (2) Can the pedagogical skills of the pastor facilitate the process of church growth?

## Impact of pedagogy on pastoral ministry

Matthew tells us about the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the disciples: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching

them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19, 20). This verse is among the many verses that have set the tone for pastoral ministry and is an assignment applicable to all faithful Christians of every age.<sup>5</sup>

Today, the work of pastors is undoubtedly dominated by preaching. However, it is not enough to just persuade the people to accept the message of salvation. What is more important in promoting discipleship is retaining new members.

Bible instruction will not be effective if pastors fail to follow the principles that support teaching. In my pastoral ministry, I have observed various times how members react to the way their pastor and other teachers handle lessons. Recently, I observed a local church during their Bible study session. While the pastor was teaching, some of the members were sleeping. A few minutes after the class was dismissed, I called on one of the students and asked, “How do you feel about the teaching?”

He answered: “The class was boring, and the pastor was preaching instead of teaching. I am not interested in attending his class.” If this type of deficiency is not addressed, the ministry of the pastor—in the context of discipleship—might be defeated. Therefore, each minister needs to

acquaint himself or herself with pedagogical knowledge in terms of planning and paying attention to the needs of the learners.

*Planning.* Planning is one of the elements of pedagogy. Indeed, “wise planning is needed to place each one in his proper sphere in the work, in order that he may obtain an experience which will fit him to bear increased responsibility.”<sup>6</sup> This part of the instruction involves setting objectives. You do not teach without purpose; therefore, make sure your objectives are clear.

Ask yourself, why do you teach the lesson that you teach? The answer will form your objective. Then identify strategies or teaching methods you can apply to achieve your objective. Jesus was a planner. While on earth, He taught with an objective and used different methods. When Jesus met Andrew and Peter, they were struggling to catch fish. Jesus taught them how to catch fish by asking for a demonstration. This act is what modern educators call learning by doing.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a pastor should allow the members of his or her class to contribute immensely to the lesson. Assign work to them, and if possible, request members to teach certain topics. In addition, use the Think-Pair-Share technique.<sup>8</sup> After the lesson, ask the students to pair off, talk together, and then share with the larger group what they have learned.



*Understanding learners.* Understanding the learners that constitute your audience is a critical principle in pedagogy. Jesus was a Master in this practice. Jesus knew His audience. You cannot teach effectively if you do not connect the lesson to the needs of the learners. Today, our classes can be dominated by millennials, a group of people “that walk with more information in their fingertips.”<sup>9</sup> Church leaders must, therefore, pay attention to the needs of the diverse groups within their church and prepare lessons to address these needs. The factors that differentiate individuals from each other are “abilities, interests, values and attitudes, and home background.”<sup>10</sup> A pastor in the ministry of leading people to attain maturity in Christian faith should become acquainted with these factors and the diverse, differentiated teaching activities to address individual learning needs. Pearl Subban puts it this way: “It is necessary to take into account the vast differences among students in a classroom, acknowledging each student’s strengths while accommodating their limitations.”<sup>11</sup>

Love for the people should motivate your curiosity to know your learners. Jesus, in His time, loved His audience and was patient with them at all times. The duties of a pastor should follow those of Jesus Christ: “Let our teachers strive to follow His example, to cherish His spirit of tender sympathy.”<sup>12</sup> This statement implies that all pastors need to replicate the love Jesus showed to the people during His time in the ministry. Love will produce patience. Without the value of patience, a pastor will be unable to cope with different learners.

## Pedagogy and church growth

The passion for growth is a precursor for teaching. If gospel teachers teach as the Spirit directs and perform God’s work as the Word dictates, they will experience endless progress until Christ appears.<sup>13</sup> The Bible speaks extensively about men and women of God who devoted themselves to teaching

the Word of God. In most cases, the people who received God’s Word grew to become strong believers.

Jesus went to the synagogue on different occasions to teach the people about the kingdom of God: “He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him” (Luke 4:15). Almost every word in this verse is emphatic. The Greek word for teaching, as used in this context, is *didasko* (διδάσκω). This word means “to impart instruction.”<sup>14</sup> Jesus spent a great portion of His life instructing His disciples and those who antagonized Him that the service of God is paramount in life.<sup>15</sup>

Also, in the verse, the Greek term *δοξαζόμενος* (*doxazomenos*)<sup>16</sup>—“praised,” implies that the church members acknowledged His teaching and honored Him. Nobody will celebrate your work unless he or she is happy with your instruction. As in marriage, your Bible teaching should bring joy and happiness to the members: “Each is to minister to the happiness of the other.”<sup>17</sup>

Many a time I had been a victim of laxity. When I first joined the ministry, I felt the best thing to do was to be hard on church members. Most of the time, lessons would be prepared to attack weak members instead of appealing to the fainting souls. Because of the way we prepare lessons, our classes sometimes end in chaos: an attitude that remains dominant in most congregations.

Positive reinforcement is one strategy that we can use to promote an effective teaching ministry. Compliment members who contribute to Bible study. Commend those who find answers to questions. There is nothing wrong with appreciating your people’s efforts. When Peter told Jesus who He was, Jesus said: “‘And on this rock, I will build my church’ ” (Matt. 16:18). Imagine Peter’s feeling of joy at this acknowledgement of his faith. Such words of kindness could have contributed to his effective ministry. When you practice this behavior, you are indirectly strengthening that member’s particular behavior. Peter grew to be known as an

apostle of Jesus Christ. The people you encourage today will grow and become church leaders tomorrow. In a similar manner, Jesus commended a woman by saying, “ ‘Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me’ ” (Matt. 26:10). This woman had poured an expensive ointment on Jesus, but the disciples became angry with her for such action. However, Jesus saw the woman’s action through a different lens: He commended her effort.

In the context of teaching, we should commend people whenever they share new ideas with us. No idea is bad. I met a member who shared with me that he would never speak up in church again. I asked him why. He told me that a pastor stopped him from talking while he was contributing to the lesson. He became enraged and wanted to exchange words with the pastor but, he said, the Holy Spirit intervened. This is not as uncommon as we may wish. We, as ministers, should lead by example. Theological training is not enough to manage the church activities—we also need pedagogy.

Learn to accommodate people’s weaknesses. Aquila and Priscilla demonstrated this pedagogical skill when they saw Apollos. This couple had observed Paul and the way he taught. Therefore, when they heard the doctrinal mistake Apollos made in the congregation, they did not scold him publicly. They invited him home and taught him the right way of the Lord (Acts 18:26). A few years later, Apollos became a staunch man in the Christian fold.

Teaching helps members grow. Unfortunately, we live in an era when people find it difficult to control their emotions. Sometimes, it becomes more painful when it happens among Christians. It is not good for a minister to find fault with the members. Instead, look for their strengths and help them overcome their weaknesses. This attitude will lead to church growth.


## Conclusion

In general, pedagogy impacts the ministry—it helps the members grow to maturity in faith. However, you cannot

thrive in this paradigm of church activities if you do not follow the principles that guard it. Before you can teach effectively, you must first plan. Try to define your objectives and come up with teaching strategies that will help you accomplish your objectives. The teaching task cannot be removed from pastoral ministry. Improve your instructional abilities. To achieve this task, you

must envision the growth of the church through pedagogy. Commend your members, accommodate their weaknesses, and help them grow spiritually.

Without a doubt, we must follow the example of Jesus Christ in everything we do. He came and showed us how to perform Christian duties. He is our greatest Teacher. He uses several strategies to address different people at different

times. I am looking forward to seeing a congregation where members will long to hear more of the Word of God because of the pedagogical skill the minister practices. The church belongs to all of us. As such, we must do our best to further the process of discipleship. It is not enough to just have public campaigns. The culture of nurturing the members should improve with teaching. 

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- 15 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 385.
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- 17 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 103.

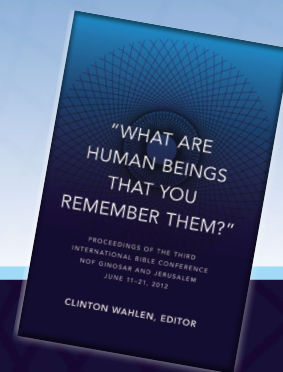
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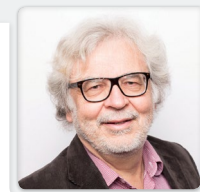


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- ➡ What are the biblical concepts of death and hell?
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# The time of crisis and prophetic visioning<sup>1</sup>

*In 1886, these words were written: “The Lord brings his erring children over the same ground again and again; but if they continually fail to heed the admonitions of his Spirit, if they fail to reform on every point where they have erred, he will finally leave them to their own weakness.”<sup>2</sup> The context of this quote was a time like no other. It was a time of decay in the prevailing social, political, and religious conditions of mid-nineteenth-century American society, and it was a time of spiritual demise among the Sabbatarian Adventists. These conditions prepared the ground for the injection of new prophetic visions—the great controversy vision (Lovett’s Grove, Ohio, 1858) and the health vision (Otsego, Michigan, 1863), in the context of the American Civil War (1861–1865). Lessons from this time of crisis must be heeded by today’s church, lest we be brought over the same ground again or, worse—be left to our own weakness.*

## The time of crisis

The Civil War ushered in a time of complex crisis in the United States. Often seen as a religious war,<sup>3</sup> the American Civil War preserved in the minds of the opposing camps a conviction that God supported their cause, and both sides “utilized the rhetoric of election and destiny in interpreting the struggle.”<sup>4</sup> Robert Mathisen asserts, “Religious rhetoric claimed divine support for the direction each side took before, during, and for decades after the war.”<sup>5</sup> More tragic were the agonizing outcomes of the bloody battles and the loss of many lives. But surprisingly, “from politician to soldiers to chaplain, a ‘divine logic’ convinced many Americans that God would ‘make their paths straight.’”<sup>6</sup>

In consequence, the existing dichotomy accentuated a spiritual crisis, namely, disorientation regarding God’s involvement in human life. Robert Handy argues, “When the fighting was over, Christian leaders on both sides sought to discern what the destiny of the reunited nation was to be in the

sight of God.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the search for new understanding progressed on the pathway of consequential challenges. First, since both sides were so compellingly convinced about God’s presence, the aftermath of the war led to spiritual disillusionment and damage to the “hereditary confidence in the Bible.”<sup>8</sup> Second, the growth of “large scale industrialization” and “bureaucracies” in the northern states changed the social dynamics, forever affecting small-town, rural ways of life. Attention was now diverted to material interests as a focus of well-being.<sup>9</sup>

The Civil War positioned the Sabbatarian Adventists at the crossroads of a moral and ethical dilemma over slavery and heightened the existing spiritual lethargy caused by the apparent delay of the Second Coming. As early as 1855, Ellen White focused attention on the spiritual condition of the Sabbatarian Adventists.<sup>10</sup> Her calls were sharp and clear. She pointed out that the truth was not internalized, and in consequence, there was a lack of faith. “A form of godliness

will not save any. All must have a deep and living experience” with God.<sup>11</sup> The named environment generated a time of external and internal crisis requiring an injection of new inspirational motivation. In other words, the prevailing turmoil spawned the necessity for a new, future-oriented understanding of life, seen from God’s perspective.

## The prophetic visioning

The Civil War dispersed the utopian dream of a perfect world, demonstrating that the human mind was not only capable of creating visions of the postmillennial hope but also capable of inflicting both spiritual and physical destruction. The paradoxes of this crisis shaped a crucible for the relinquishment of hopes based on human dreams and of expectations for a clearer understanding of God’s purposes. Walter Brueggemann argues that in such crucial moments, “God’s powerful governance is displacing the present idolatrous order of public life and is generating a new order that befits God’s will for the world.”<sup>12</sup> This



space provided the opportunity for God to inject into human life a new vision. It also challenged the community of faith both to relinquish old views and to receive an inspirational framework for a new, future-oriented perspective of life. It needs to be pointed out that such visionary understanding is never detached from the existing social and cultural challenges; rather, it takes shape as an incremental process or gradual metamorphosis within the fabrics of existing social structures.

*The great controversy and health visions shared a correlated purpose in shaping a pathway of inspirational motivation for a new mode of public existence.*

With this background, we may explore the gradual emergence of the great controversy theme. We may also examine the wholistic awareness of health as the hub of the inspired prophetic vision that injected a spiritual reorientation for life's journey in the eschatological time of waiting for the Second Advent. We will also argue that Ellen White's voice played a significant role in preparing the movement for the reception of the new but complex world.

### **The great controversy motif and the wholistic awareness of health**

In mid-March 1858, before the commencement of the Civil War, Ellen White

received the great controversy vision with clear instruction to write it down.<sup>13</sup> The heart of the vision unfolded the reality of the conflict between God and Satan, good and evil, from its inception to the end of time. Rather than penning it as a one-off description, she developed a broad perspective on this theme between 1858 and 1888.<sup>14</sup>

While the Civil War precipitated a crisis regarding the authenticity of God's involvement in human life, the great controversy theme prepared the early Sabbatarian Adventists to view human struggles and conflicts from an inspirational panorama of the victorious outcome of God's final triumph.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to physical and spiritual slavery, it highlighted the value of God-given freedom of choice and the view of a new world.<sup>16</sup> It inspired the believers to confront life's challenges with a sense of new identity and a spiritual environment that nurtured human value, uniqueness, and potential.

Reviewing the significance of the great controversy theme, Ellen White stressed its quintessential focus: "There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of the Scriptures: Christ and Him crucified."<sup>17</sup> In the light of this emphasis, she explored its visionary application. "When Christ in His work of redemption is seen to be the great central truth of the system of truth, a new light is shed upon all the events of the past and the future. They are seen in a new relation, and possess a new and deeper significance."<sup>18</sup> In her understanding, the overarching theme of the grand metanarrative found its focus in God's saving act—Jesus Christ. The unfolding story highlighted a reassuring motivation that God, the Creator, is an active Agent in the world, One who challenges the community of faith both to relinquish old views and to receive a visionary framework of a new future-oriented perspective of life.

This view was further enhanced by the Otsego health vision received Friday evening, June 5, 1863, during the opening Sabbath prayer. This vision unfolded a practical application of

what Ellen White later referred to as the "one great central truth . . . : Christ and Him crucified." On June 6 she penned the following reflection: "I was shown some things in regard to my husband and myself."<sup>19</sup> The heart of the vision took her attention away from frantic activities, heartaches, relational frustrations, and disappointments, drawing her attention to what God cares about, namely, the value, potential, and uniqueness of human life.<sup>20</sup> The Sabbath-focused vision moved beyond the emphasis on the cure of the body to the heart of the matter, the relevance of "spiritual nourishment—a place for the healing of the heart, mind, and human attitudes"—a motivational and inspirational framework for God's visionary pathway for life.<sup>21</sup>

The divinely crafted pathway of the great controversy and health visions aimed to reenergize the growing movement with a new spiritual purpose for life in the eschatological time of waiting. Brueggemann argues, "These poets [prophets] not only *discerned* the new actions of God that others did not discern, but they *wrought* the new actions of God by the power of their imagination, their tongues, their words."<sup>22</sup> Such utterances were always relevant to their time and place, but at the same time, they inspired the reception of a new world given by God through these prophets.<sup>23</sup> In the context of the described crisis, the great controversy and health visions shared a correlated purpose in shaping a pathway of inspirational motivation for a new mode of public existence.

### **The pathway of creative visioning**

The period of postwar reconstruction (1865–1877) embroiled the nation in political and social conflicts. The long-sought-after emancipation from the bondage of slavery led to a slow, grinding process of integrating the ideals of freedom, equality, and value for all into the fabric of the social and political life of the nation. During this time, the newly organized Seventh-day Adventist Church confronted the

challenge of stepping into the realm of a progressively changing world.

The great controversy theme contributed to Ellen White's in-depth understanding of God's purpose for life in the broken world. While the period of Reconstruction in the American society aimed to integrate the lost vision of the intrinsic value of human life and its purpose, Ellen White affirmed the value of human life and disseminated a spiritual reconstruction, undiscerned by the believers as yet, by applying the principles of the great controversy and health to life.

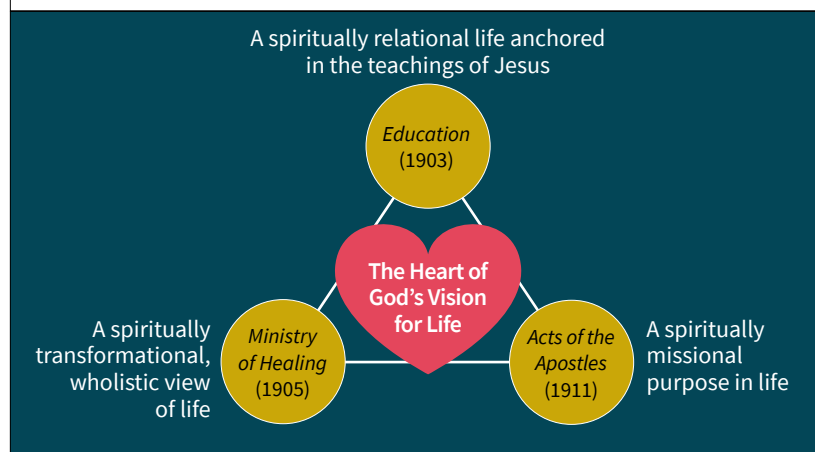
It needs to be noted that it was during the 23 years from 1888 to 1911 that Ellen White published her most significant works.<sup>24</sup> During this period of creative visioning, she recaptured the quintessential elements of God's purpose for the ongoing journey of faith. Her reflections on God's communicative presence inspired her with insights of new realities, a reception and vision of a new world seen through the lenses of God's passion for the lost.

While space does not permit a comprehensive analysis of all her works published during this period, in the context of the great controversy theme and the wholistic view of well-being, we may discern the overarching presence of four overlapping motifs:

1. *Spiritual authenticity.* Ellen White's lifelong emphasis accentuated the significance of spiritual life springing from a personal relationship with God. She wrote, "Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart."<sup>25</sup>
2. *Genuine relationships.* She maintained that a personal relationship with God enhances the depth of spiritual authenticity, and, in turn, its influence stimulates a revitalized refreshment and peace for "the strain of life's intense activities."<sup>26</sup>
3. *Professional development.* In her understanding, the spiritual focus was not an end in itself but rather a preparation of fertile ground for

**Figure 1: Inspired and Inspirational Purpose of the Prophetic Visioning**

*The Desire of Ages* (1898) • *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900)



the prosperous development of God-given talents and abilities.<sup>27</sup>

4. *Personal identity.* She saw that while the destructive forces of evil diminish the value of human life, God's presence inspires and restores it.

The listed motifs stemmed from the source of all wisdom, a God-shaped inspirational framework of His designed purpose for Christian living. For this purpose, spiritual authenticity, genuine relationships, and a healthy sense of personal identity composed the heart and distinctiveness of Ellen White's visionary motivation. In this respect, her views stood in vast contrast to the devalued perspective of human life during and after the crisis of the Civil War. In this context, she encouraged believers to shape a point of reference, not in time-oriented speculations but with implicit trust and confidence in Jesus, in the progressively changing and complex world.<sup>28</sup>

During the period of creative visioning, her reflections on God's communicative presence inspired her with a new focus, a contextualized meaning of faith-oriented experience with Jesus. Rather than shaping a rigid, prescriptive, and authoritarian formula of religiosity, the visions reenergized the church with a new purpose for life and mission. Figure 1 illustrates the focal objective of Ellen

White's prophetic visualization of God's purpose for the church:

- A spiritually relational life anchored in the teachings of Jesus
- A spiritually transformational, wholistic view of life
- A spiritually missional purpose of life

Her prophetic voice called for the injection of God's love into a spiritually oriented approach to mission. "Marvelous will be the transformation wrought in him who by faith opens the door of the heart to the Saviour."<sup>29</sup>

## Five leadership applications

This brief historical overview, delineating the purpose and influence of prophetic visioning in the time of crisis, serves to highlight the value and significance of visionary and inspirational leadership. Inspirational and visionary leadership

- shapes the framework of implicit trust and confidence in God's involvement in human life and history;
- provides space for a life-transforming experience of God's love that, in turn, generates a passion for sharing Christlike attitudes in the brokenness of human life;
- encourages people to recapture the essence of God's vision for the

church, namely, a spiritually, missional service, a space in which individuals rediscover their uniqueness, value, and potential and use personal talents to communicate Jesus wherever they are;


- imparts boldness to relinquish old status-quo methodologies, to provide a contextualized and refreshed but biblically grounded meaning of faith in Jesus; and
- transforms pastoral leadership influence from a prescriptively authoritarian and informative mode to an inspirational voice calling people to visualize the incomprehensible benefits of God's kingdom of grace.

## Five leadership challenges

The context of the outlined crisis suggests that the great controversy and the health visions, along with Ellen

White's literary contribution between 1888 and 1911, share a correlated purpose that

- *shaped* a visionary and inspirational pathway for a new mode of existence in the complexity of life;
- *enriched* the church with a motivational pathway augmenting human value, uniqueness, and the potential for God's designed purpose;
- *directed* attention to a relational point of reference secured in an implicit trust and confidence in God;
- *provided* a reassuring conviction in God's presence and a challenge to follow His vision for public existence in a changing world; and
- *challenged* the global church family to become Christ's extended hands in their respective communities and cultures.

In the context of the Civil War, this new orientation inspired the church to break through race and gender barriers set by human traditions and to provide restitution and restoration, in harmony with the heartbeat of the Christian ethos. In this respect, Ellen White moved beyond the constraints of organizational structures. Her visualization was of a new world given by God combined with an even more profound, vertically anchored, motivational perspective. "All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity."<sup>30</sup> In her mind, the experience of sharing the power of God's grace in the complexity of the changing world prepares the church for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come—service that will flow through eternity from more complete "revelations of God and Christ."<sup>31</sup> 

1 Adapted from J. Skrzypaszek, "The Time of Crisis and Prophetic Imagination" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, San Antonio, TX, November 2016). [https://research.avondale.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=theo\\_conferences](https://research.avondale.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=theo_conferences)

2 Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle, Switzerland: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 137.

3 Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 109–112. Charles H. Lippy, *Introducing American Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 127–130. Edwin S. Gaustad and Mark A. Noll, eds., *A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 517–519. Mitchell Snay, "Religion, the Origins of Southern Nationalism, and the Coming of the Civil War," in *Critical Issues in American Religious History*, ed. Robert R. Mathisen, 2nd rev. ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 345–350. Jud Lake, *A Nation in God's Shadow: Ellen White and the Civil War* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2017).

4 Robert T. Handy, "The American Messianic Consciousness: The Concept of the Chosen People and Manifest Destiny," *Review and Expositor* 73, no. 1 (1976): 52. See also Alan Johnson, "The Bible and War in America: An Historical Survey," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 2 (June 1985): 174, 175.

5 Robert R. Mathisen, ed., "Religion and America's Civil War: How Did Religion Impact the Civil War?" in *Critical Issues in American Religious History*, 332.

6 Mathisen, "Religion and America's Civil War," 332.

7 Handy, "The American Messianic Consciousness," 52.

8 Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 110.

9 Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 110.

10 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 1:125. See also pages 119, 120.

11 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:125.

12 Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 4.

13 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), 162.

14 Ellen White developed the great controversy theme in the following books: *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (1858); *Spiritual Gifts*, vols. 3 and 4 (1864); *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 1–4 (1870–1884); *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (1888).

15 Herbert E. Douglass points out, "Many scholars have identified Ellen White's unifying principle as the Great Controversy Theme. This provided a coherent framework for her theological thought as well as her principles in education, health, missiology, social issues, and environmental topics." *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1998), 256.

16 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 48, 49.

17 Ellen G. White, "Circulation of *The Great Controversy*," Ms. 31, 1890.

18 White, "Circulation of *The Great Controversy*," Ms. 31, 1890.

19 Ellen G. White, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," Ms. 1, 1863.

20 John Skrzypaszek, "The Heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Health Message," *Ministry*, December 2014, 6–8.

21 Skrzypaszek, "Heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Health Message," 8.

22 Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 2; emphasis original.

23 Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 2.

24 Ellen White's major literary publications between 1888 and 1911 were as follows: *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* (1888), *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (1890), *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), *Steps to Christ* (1892), *Gospel Workers* (1892), *Christian Education* (1893), *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (1896), *Healthful Living* (1897), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), *Education* (1903), *The Ministry of Healing* (1905), and *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911).

25 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 363.

26 White, *Desire of Ages*, 363.

27 White, *Desire of Ages*, 363.

28 John Skrzypaszek, "God's Messenger: Australian Writings Motivate Worldwide: A Look at Ellen White's Life and Legacy," *Adventist World*, October 2015, 23.

29 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 93.

30 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 93.

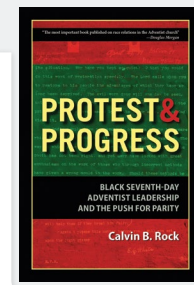
31 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1907), 678.

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# Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity

By Calvin Rock, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018.



*Protest and Progress* is one of the most significant books written about an area of Adventist history often overlooked by church scholars. Chronicling the struggles of black Adventists for equality within the organization, Calvin Rock recounts in section 1 the four major protest movements by black Adventist leaders. In section 2, he addresses the question of the continuing relevance of black-led conferences.

Dr. Rock identifies the first period as the push for social and administrative participation, starting in 1889 and lasting until 1929. Although the early Adventist pioneers advocated abolition, equality, and justice and supported the North in the American Civil War, by the time the denomination entered the last decade of the nineteenth century, it had abandoned its earlier progressive views. At the end of this first period, Rock describes the outcome in the following way: “Black church employees still found themselves excluded from critical discussions and decision making. The result was that they remained trapped in second-class status, being systematically denied parity in matters of employee education, equal salary, and benefits, church budgeting and enhanced service opportunities and even basic facilities such as cafeterias.” (23)

The second phase of the black struggle began in 1929 and ended in 1944. It called for accommodation within the organizational structure. Marking a significant turning point and the most successful phase, it came in the aftermath of sustained marginalization by the organization. The black constituency of the denomination compelled the leadership to the bargaining table, not necessarily for a separate administrative structure but for full integration and equality. Rather than granting that request, the organization chose to give them a separate governing structure, black-led conferences. Nonetheless, it would prove to be a blessing and

accelerated church growth among blacks. The West Coast would follow a different model but, even there, leadership recognized the need to provide special black supervision over its work.


The third phase of the black struggle ran from 1969 to 1980. This phase, the push for black unions, continued the call for greater autonomy and representation for the black work. This third phase would be the most divisive and would create deep divisions among black leadership. The presidents of the black conferences spearheaded the movement, putting them at odds with black leaders already embedded in the various hierarchical structures of the denomination. Many well-known black leaders in the upper echelons of the church opposed the move. Unfortunately, at times, their disagreement degenerated into name-calling on both sides. The pro-union group lost the battle, but one of the most highly respected black leaders of that time was elected as president of the North American Division and thus ended the drive toward black unions.

The fourth phase of the struggle, from 1998 through 2000, was a push for equitable retirement security. Black retirees were fewer in numbers, lived fewer years than their white counterparts, and were paying much more into a system than they were receiving. They asked for an adjustment—but without success. The higher organization refused to accommodate the wishes of the black conferences. The leaders began to explore other retirement options, found one far superior to the denomination’s, and presented their case to the North American Division. After much debate, the division leadership approved the plan and requested compensation for lost revenue. Rock correctly identifies this outcome as a signal victory for black Adventist leadership. It marked a capstone in their struggle for equal treatment within the denomination.

In section two of the book, Rock deftly shifts from simply describing the unfolding drama of history to becoming a polemicist. Marshaling a series of arguments, he engages in sociological, cultural, historical, theological, and practical analyses to make the point that blacks are better served by their own leaders. Now is definitely not the time to do away with black conferences. They have served their purpose well and are still very much needed. Although at times this section seems disconnected from the first one, I think Rock is attempting to create a cohesive theoretical framework for the history that he described in the previous section.

A retired General Conference vice president, Rock does an excellent job identifying the issues and major players. A more qualified person could not be chosen to write this history. He had a front-row seat in the drama, witnessing many of the significant events of the last two phases. Furthermore, he was well connected to the major players and had an important role. This close connection, however, has its downside, leading the reader to wonder how objective the author could be when he was so intimately connected with many of the issues and the persons involved.

Nevertheless, Rock has carefully crafted and persuasively argued a historically well-documented and powerful account of the struggles of African-Americans to achieve some level of equality and justice within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because of the paucity of this information within the larger Adventist historiography, his book is a much-needed work that fills a vacuum. It should be read by all Adventist leaders concerned about justice and equality within the organization.

—Reviewed by Trevor O'Reggio, PhD, DMin,  
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## ► 2018 Northern Asia-Pacific Division International Mission Congress, Goyang, Korea

The 2018 International Mission Congress (IMC) of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) took place at Korea International Exhibition Center (KINTEX) in Goyang, Korea, August 8–11, 2018. Almost 4,000 participants from 40 countries, including Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia, and China, came and shared the wonderful blessings of God. On the Sabbath, the last day of the event, more than 5,500 Adventist members attended the meetings.

NSD held this meeting to prepare Adventist church members in their region for Total Member Involvement (an initiative of the General Conference that seeks to get every member involved in sharing Jesus) and to adopt a mission spirit to go forward and share the gospel message with others to hasten Jesus' second coming.

About 170 church leaders from the Seventh-day Adventist Church's

General Conference in the US state of Maryland and from the 13 world divisions and their subregions came to share their inspiring messages and conduct various seminars. Two hundred and sixty participants in the Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) Conference and 75 leaders from the Hope Channel Network Leadership Conference, held during and after the Congress, enjoyed IMC programs.

**Ted N. C. Wilson**, president of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, preached on Sabbath. He said, "God is using everyone who is willing to be used—emptying themselves of self and committing themselves to growing in Christ through Bible study, study of the Spirit of Prophecy, and prayer. God will then use you in powerful outreach to others." **Mark Finley**, special assistant to Wilson for

Photo: Northern Asia-Pacific Division



evangelism, was the main speaker for the evening meetings.

During the Mission Commitment Ceremony, **Si Young Kim**, president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, challenged participants to go just like Caleb did. Gospel ministers and mission groups, including the 1,000 Missionary Movement, His Hands, Pioneer Mission Movement, medical missionaries, and self-supporting missionaries, stood together hand in hand. Kim asked participants to raise their candles and scarves with the writing "TMI, Go Forward!" All the participants responded by saying, "Here am I, send me!" [Northern Asia-Pacific Division Communication Department]

## ► 2018 Trans-European Division European Pastors' Council, Belgrade, Serbia

September 3, 2018—Belgrade, Serbia—The opening message of the 2018 Trans-European Division's European Pastors' Council (EPC) was given by the General Conference president, **Ted N. C. Wilson**, who spoke on the topic "I have a dream . . . of a biblical church." By using the key points of the EPC theme—Connect, Inspire, Change—Pastor Wilson challenged ministers to take on God's dream for Europe and for the Trans-European Division (TED) in particular.

Because aggressive secularism has nurtured a post-Christian culture

in many of the countries of the TED, Sabbath speaker Dr. **Elizabeth Talbot**, speaker/director for the Jesus 101 Biblical Institute, challenged church leaders at the EPC in Belgrade, Serbia, to feed the spiritually hungry people of Europe with the broken body of Jesus, holding out Jesus to people who may be questioning, "Is there enough for me?"

Coordinated under the leadership of Pastor **Patrick Johnson**, TED ministerial director, this particular EPC made an extraordinary impression on the ministers and their families who attended as well as on the other

Photo: Elsie Tjeransen/ADAMS



workers, volunteers, and guests. "This is the fourth EPC that I've been to, and it has definitely been the best," said **Rosemary Lethbridge**, a pastor from England.

"I've loved the talks and seminars," said **Alexandru Gutu**. "Many times I

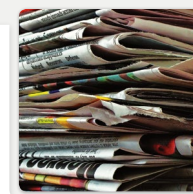


Photo: Elsie Tjeransen/ADAMS



had tears in my eyes from the beautiful things that have been said.”

“I’ve loved meeting fellow workers from different parts of the division,” said Jeremy Johnson. “We’re all in

this together, and we have so much in common.”

**Marko Markovic**, a volunteer from Serbia, said, “I’ve really enjoyed just helping people find their way around.”



## ► 2018 Inter-American Division Festival of Cross-Cultural Missions, Trinidad and Tobago

**T**hemed “Celebrating the Past and Reaching All People for Christ,” the four-day Festival of the Laity and Cross-Cultural Mission conference was aimed at exposing leaders to the transforming power of lay involvement in evangelism and inspiring missionary enthusiasts to continue sharing Christ by developing meaningful interactions and respect for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and religious persuasions. It also sought to teach delegates how to cross barriers effectively and establish centers of influence and love.

“We want to challenge you not to focus on traditional evangelism only but appreciate the diversity of our cultures and share Jesus to them,”

said **Samuel Telemaque**, director of the Office of Adventist Mission for the Inter-American Division (IAD) and main organizer of the event.

“What we do is for people and about people,” said **Easton Marks**, a pastor from the Northeastern Conference in New York, United States. “A church that is invisible will have a hard time blessing and ministering to the influential and wealthy, many of whom work and reside across the IAD territory.”

**Devon Carkoo**, a delegate from Trinidad, said that he grew up in a Hindu community. “I sense the need now to reach out to them for their salvation.” [Royston Philbert, Inter-American Division News]  

For some of the older ministers, the fellowship was key. “I’ve enjoyed reconnecting with old friends and colleagues,” said **Henrick Jorgensen** from the Danish Union.

**Geza Hegyes-Horvath** from Hungary spoke warmly of the joy he had in meeting people after not seeing them for 20 years, “hugging them and renewing friendships.” Geza also mentioned “the very high spiritual atmosphere,” which was a recurring theme.

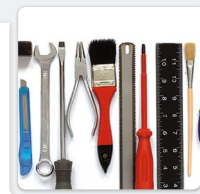
Regarding connections, TED president Pastor **Raafat Kamal** spoke of the connections that had been made during the EPC but also of the connection that exists among the 87,000 Seventh-day Adventist members in the 22 countries that make up the Trans-European Division. More of a challenge is making connections with the 206 million neighbors we have in our communities. [John Surridge, British Union Conference Executive Secretary]

Photos: Curtis Henry, Inter-American Division News





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# 3 Keys to Bring Life to Sabbath School

I began my ministry at a time when Sabbath School attendance was not a problem. Sabbath School in the churches I pastored was always well attended. The classes were engaging, exciting, and meaningful. Sadly, that is not now the case in some areas. Some believe that Sabbath School is not a strong tool for spiritual education, that it is predictable and boring, and that it has lost its focus on mission.

If you have been a Seventh-day Adventist long enough, you have probably heard the saying, “Sabbath School is the heart of the church.” It might sound like a cliché, but it is an undeniable truth. Not only is Sabbath School the heart of the church, but its importance in the life of the believer cannot be overestimated. Sabbath School is the golden thread that keeps the Seventh-day Adventist Church united theologically and missiologically.

Sabbath School is the very basis of our Christian growth; it is the daily, weekly, continuous focus on God’s Word that leads an individual, and the church collective, to grow in spiritual strength. Your role as a pastor in emphasizing Sabbath School, and Sabbath School attendance, is vital if the individual and the church are to flourish in spiritual growth and biblical understanding.

Here are three keys to bring life to your Sabbath School:

## 1. Bible study and prayer

Sabbath School is the perfect setting to rediscover the power of Bible study and prayer. Encourage members to make the Sabbath School class participatory, prayerfully reading the Bible and discussing the lesson as a group. The teaching time is not the preaching time. The teacher should not preach a sermon but assist in the study and understanding of the Bible

text, reviewing the main points and encouraging members to engage in individual Bible study during the week.

## 2. Fellowship

Sometimes people stop attending Sabbath School and no one notices. One of the advantages of a small Sabbath School class is that the teacher knows who is missing and can develop plans to visit, pray for, and care for missing or hurting members, giving territory assignments. The Sabbath School class should discuss ways to minister to church family needs—inactive members, youth, families, women, and other groups—and should spend time together praying for these needs.

## 3. Mission

Remember, Sabbath School was organized for missionary purposes. Teach your members to pray for and discuss ways of reaching your community, your city, and the world to fulfill the gospel commission. Plans should be made and implemented to prepare the soil of the heart, plant the seed, cultivate spiritual interests, and harvest decisions for the kingdom of God. The goal should be to make disciples of Jesus who stay in the church rather than just baptizing members. Youth can be involved through passing out tracts, praying for neighbors, prayer walking, and preaching at home or abroad. The best support we can give our youth is teaching them to work for the Master.

In addition to these three main components, here are more practical ideas to bring life to your Sabbath School:

### Make Sabbath School attractive and engaging

- Include prayer sessions as part of Sabbath School; perhaps a special

prayer session 15 to 30 minutes before Sabbath School begins. Make it meaningful and exciting.

- Keep the Sabbath School program simple, spiritual, and relevant. Each Sabbath could be like an evangelistic meeting with an attractive, well-planned program. This approach will definitely improve Sabbath School attendance.
- Establish TMI—Total Member Involvement—Sabbath School groups. These groups will meet during the week in addition to Sabbath morning.
- Develop a strong mission emphasis. One way to do this is through the *Mission Spotlight* program. These free videos can be downloaded from [am.adventistmission.org/mission-spotlight](http://am.adventistmission.org/mission-spotlight). The inspiring stories will help promote mission offerings that are so needed throughout the world.

### Declare one day each quarter “Friends Day”

- Set a goal of 10 to 50 friends attending, the number depending on church size. Some churches can aim for 100 friends.
- Every friend who comes to church that Sabbath will get a gift—such as a book or a magazine—and a meal.
- Offer one-day seminars on several relevant topics: family, finances, fitness, friendship.

Sabbath School must be important to you as a pastor if it is going to be important to your members. As you pray, plan, and implement these ideas, you will discover the Holy Spirit breathing new life into your Sabbath School and into your church and empowering you to guide your congregation in the process of spiritual and numerical growth. 🙌

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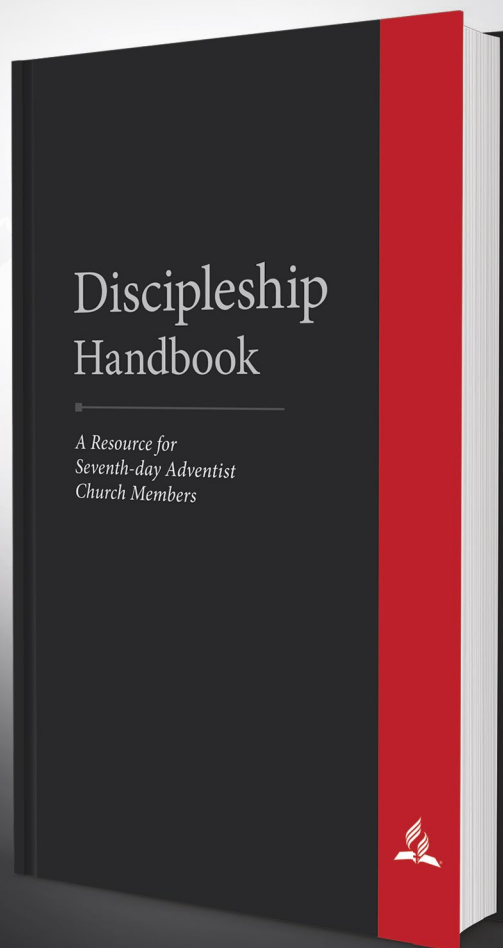
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